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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 003297

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DRL (FARR); EUR/WE (VAN CLEVE);
EAP/CM

FROM EMBASSY VATICAN/MESSAGE NO. 94/01

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/20/11

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [PINR](#) [VT](#) [CH](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [PINR](#) [VT](#) [CH](#) [TW](#) [PREL](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: THE VATICAN AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN

CHINA: INPUT FOR PRESIDENTIAL BACKGROUND PAPER.

(U) CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. JOSEPH
MERANTE. REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

[11.](#) (U) THE VATICAN'S OVERRIDING CONCERN IN
CONFIDENTIAL

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MAINLAND CHINA IS ITS RIGHT TO MINISTER TO THE
ESTIMATED 10 MILLION CATHOLIC POPULATION. THE
VATICAN AND THE PRC DO NOT HAVE OFFICIAL
RELATIONS. THE PRC REPUDIATES VATICAN CLAIMS TO
LEAD CHINESE CATHOLICS AND INTERPRETS VATICAN
ECCLESIASTICAL ACTIONS AS FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN
SOVEREIGN AFFAIRS. THE PRC OVERSEES THE OFFICIAL
"CATHOLIC PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION," SET UP IN 1951
TO HARMONIZE RELIGIOUS PRACTICE WITH STATE
AUTHORITIES. AN UNDERGROUND CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
REMAINS LOYAL TO VATICAN LEADERSHIP.

TAIWAN, THE VATICAN, AND THE PRC

[12.](#) (C) THE VATICAN MAINTAINS OFFICIAL STATE-TO-
STATE RELATIONS WITH TAIWAN (THE REPUBLIC OF
CHINA), HAVING TRANSFERRED ITS EMBASSY (KNOWN AS
A "NUNCIATURE") FROM BEIJING TO TAIPEI IN THE
WAKE OF THE REVOLUTION. TAIWAN IN TURN MAINTAINS
AN EMBASSY TO THE VATICAN, PROVIDING THE ISLAND
NATION WITH A PRECIOUS EUROPEAN PLATFORM FROM
WHICH TO PURSUE A VIGOROUS DIPLOMATIC AGENDA.
THE VATICAN CONTINUES TO SIGNAL ITS READINESS TO
DOWNGRADE ITS TAIPEI MISSION AND ESTABLISH
OFFICIAL RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. THE VATICAN
AFFIRMS THAT THE MOTHBALLING OF ITS ORIGINAL
BEIJING NUNCIATURE WAS NEVER DEFINITIVE, ADDING
THAT IT HAS CONSISTENTLY PRACTICED A ONE-CHINA-
POLICY. THE VATICAN HAS A LOW-KEY PRESENCE IN
CONFIDENTIAL

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HONG KONG, AN OFFICE THAT IS A VESTIGE OF THE
HAND-OVER; IT CLAIMS TO BE POISED TO REOPEN IN
BEIJING QUOTE OVERNIGHT ENDQUOTE, A CLAIM THAT IS
LARGELY RHETORICAL. TAIWAN'S REPRESENTATIVES TO
THE VATICAN ARE SANGUINE AT THIS PROSPECT OF A
DIPLOMATIC SEA CHANGE, YET THE TAIWAN EMBASSY IS
QUIETLY EXPLORING OTHER WAYS TO PRESERVE A
DIPLOMATIC PRESENCE IN ROME, FOR INSTANCE,
THROUGH ACCREDITATION TO THE SOVEREIGN MILITARY
ORDER OF MALTA, LOCATED IN ROME AND FORMALLY
RECOGNIZED BY 85 GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING ITALY.

[13.](#) (C) VATICAN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRC REMAIN
UNOFFICIAL, IRREGULAR, AND OFTEN VITUPERATIVE.
THE STICKING POINT IS PRC UNWILLINGNESS TO
ACKNOWLEDGE VATICAN JURISDICTION OVER THE CHINESE
CATHOLIC COMMUNITY, INCLUDING VATICAN OVERSIGHT
OF THE TRAINING OF CLERGY AND THE APPOINTMENT OF
NEW BISHOPS. THE PRC TREATS VATICAN CLAIMS TO
ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY IN CHINA AS TANTAMOUNT
TO FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN INTERNAL SOVEREIGN
AFFAIRS. WHILE THE PRC PERMITS OCCASIONAL CHURCH
VISITS BY VATICAN ENVOYS, INCLUDING AT THE
CARDINAL LEVEL, AND ALLOWS LIMITED TRAINING
ABROAD FOR "PATRIOTIC" SEMINARIANS, THE RUMORS OF
AN EMERGING DIPLOMATIC RAPPROCHEMENT HAVE BEEN
GREATLY OVERSTATED, WITH THE VATICAN-PRC
RELATIONSHIP INCREASINGLY STRAINED. IN JANUARY
2000 THE PRC CROSSED A RUBICON OF SORTS WHEN THE
STATE-SPONSORED "CATHOLIC PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION"
ORDAINED FIVE BISHOPS IN DEFIANCE OF A VATICAN
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BAN. CONVERSELY, THE MASS BEATIFICATION OF 120
CHINESE MARTYRS AT THE VATICAN ON OCTOBER 1,
2000, A PRC NATIONAL HOLIDAY IN CELEBRATION OF
THE REVOLUTION, WAS A PROVOCATION, WITH THE PRC

LAMBASTING THE MARTYRS AS CRIMINAL ELEMENTS AND
IMPERIALIST BLACKGUARDS. THE PRC WAS DEAF TO
VATICAN PROTESTS THAT THE CHOICE OF DATE WAS
SHEER COINCIDENCE.

THE CATHOLIC PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION AND THE
UNDERGROUND CHURCH: A BLURRING LINE.

14. (C) IN 1951 THE PRC ESTABLISHED AN OFFICIAL
"CATHOLIC PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION" TO MINISTER TO
THE COUNTRY'S CATHOLIC POPULATION. RELIGIOUS
PRACTICE OUTSIDE THE CONFINES OF THE PATRIOTIC
ASSOCIATION IS TECHNICALLY ILLEGAL, YET HAS
CONTINUED IN GATHERINGS OF THE SO-CALLED
UNDERGROUND CHURCH. ACCORDING TO THE VATICAN,
MEMBERS OF THIS UNDERGROUND CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
CONTINUE TO RUN THE RISK OF DETENTION, PUNITIVE

CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION DRL-02

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	DOT-00	DS-00
	EAP-00	EB-00	EUR-00	FAAE-00	FBIE-00	VC-00	TEDE-00
	INR-00	LAB-01	VCE-00	NSAE-00	SSO-00	SS-00	USIE-00
	IIP-00	DSCC-00	SAS-00	/003W			
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FINES, AND OTHER FORMS OF GOVERNMENT PERSECUTION.
VATICAN MEDIA HAVE REPORTED THE RAMPANT
DESTRUCTION OF PLACES OF WORSHIP LACKING OFFICIAL
PERMITS. THE VATICAN HAS VOICED CONCERN THAT
BOTH THE CATHOLIC PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION AND THE
CONFIDENTIAL

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UNDERGROUND CHURCH FACE A SHORTAGE OF CLERGY AS
WELL AS A LOOMING GENERATION GAP, WITH MOST
PRIESTS TRAINED BEFORE 1955 OR AFTER 1985 ON
ACCOUNT OF A PROLONGED INTERRUPTION OF OFFICIAL
ORDINATIONS. MOREOVER, A NUMBER OF ELDERLY
CLERGY REMAIN IN DETENTION, WITH THE VATICAN
OSTENSIBLY UNABLE TO DETERMINE THEIR WELFARE AND
WHEREABOUTS. THE VATICAN IS CAUTIOUS IN ITS
COMMENTARY ON THE PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION AND THERE
ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE DIVISION BETWEEN THE
PATRIOTIC AND UNDERGROUND CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES IS
BLURRING. ACCORDING TO VATICAN SOURCES AND FIELD
REPORTING, A NUMBER OF CLERGY IN THE PATRIOTIC
CHURCH ARE IN TRUTH LOYAL TO THE VATICAN.
SIMILARLY, THE VATICAN WELCOMES VISITS BY
PATRIOTIC ASSOCIATION SEMINARIANS AS A CHANCE TO
SHAPE, EVEN IF INDIRECTLY, THEIR THEOLOGICAL
FORMATION.
MERANTE